

Major military brothels



Region under Japanese control in 1942 X Locations cited by individuals
Locations shown in documents released July 6 by the government

Rapes sparked call for facilities

The following are excerpts from wartime military documents stressing the need to produce a system of "comfort women."

Warning about the conduct of army personnel toward local residents, issued in 1938 by Naosaburo Okabe, chief of staff of the North China Army, to each unit:

1. Recently, sabotage of transportation works in Shandong Province has been frequently reported.
2. The slow recovery of public order is partly due to the insufficient number of troops in the rear. But it is also true that illegal conduct by soldiers and officers toward local residents has stirred up their

when compared with the large number of soldiers.

Because Shanghai and Nanjing have some facilities other than military comfort quarters to satisfy soldiers, comfort women were sent to remote areas or the front, which lack military comfort quarters. But quite a large number of rape cases have occurred in the countryside.

"Behind the occurrence of rape is not only the lack of comfort women but also the fact that soldiers are curious about Chinese women, as students abroad are interested in Western women.

Besides, they think they can do anything

Wartime brothels seemed 'natural'

Veteran cites emotional ties between draftees, forced prostitutes

First in a series
By SHINJI ITO
Staff writer

Wartime Japanese troops never questioned the morality of buying the sexual services of "comfort women," who were in large part brought from colonized Korea to front-line brothels, according to former soldiers who helped run the facilities.

"It was quite natural for us," said former 2nd Lt. Seiki-

any injustices in the comfort women system. These include the alleged abduction and coercion of thousands of Korean women to serve the soldiers' needs.

"I no longer think about such issues any more," Yamada said. "More than four decades have passed and my concern has waned."

Yamada said he is annoyed by the publicity he has received in recent months over his wartime role.

And if by chance he were to encounter any of the women he knew in Wuhan, "I would have nothing to say," he said.

Keiichi Ito, whose military duty in a Nanjing suburb was to provide supplies for the women, said his feelings are so complex he would not be able to find the proper words to discuss the period with the women he knew.

"This is an immense issue.

Words cannot describe how I feel, and this is true not just for comfort women but also for other things that relate to the war. Saying that I feel sorry for the women does not sound right," the 75-year-old novelist said.

Ito has written extensively on the women and other aspects of the war.

Origins unknown

Most of the soldiers never knew how the women came to be in the brothels, he said, but the troops believed they came of their own accord.

The idea of compensating the comfort women is probably impractical, he said, because selecting the real victims among those who have or may in the future come forward will be difficult.

The former soldiers are either dead or too old to remember the details and testimony, Ito added.

In an essay published in 1977, Ito wrote that foot soldiers — young men drafted to



A SERVICEMAN drinks with a "comfort woman" in a Chinese bar in the late 1930s.

come to a foreign land to kill or be killed — and the local comfort women shared a sense of solidarity.

"The Korean women, although they were engaged in comforting, did not easily trust the Japanese soldiers," he wrote. "But when a soldier served a woman faithfully and she and the women around her recognized that, they turned off their alarms, and the man was accepted into their life."

"Such a soldier would help them on various matters. For example, the women may have wanted to secretly send letters or goods to certain soldiers who were away at the front. Or the women may have wanted to know how the soldiers were doing."

'Sense of solidarity'

"Both the women and the soldiers lived at a low level in the social hierarchy. Some-

times the women were treated like sex tools, but there was always a sense of solidarity.

"The women and soldiers were not simply sellers and buyers. Frequently, there were emotional and dramatic moments that were possible only at the front."

Kikuichi Fukuyama, 71, was a fighter pilot in the army. He recalled seeing hundreds of comfort women — Koreans, Taiwanese and Chinese — on the streets in Guangzhou, China, and elsewhere.

Almost all the draftees, including married troops, used the brothels, Fukuyama said. "Their only pastime was to go out on off-duty days to eat, drink and use comfort women," he said.

But most career military men, like himself, did not visit the brothels, he said.

They believed the women

provided by the military were meant for undisciplined draftees; a way to stop them from raping local residents. "The number of drafted soldiers was huge, so the comfort women must have been hard time. Their bodies must have been worn out," Fukuyama said. "Soldiers usually had no women around them, so they must have behaved like beasts at the comfort quarters."

Fukuyama believes compensation should be paid to those who were abducted, forced to work and to those who were deceived into the job.

"We should pay them much as they want in compensation," he said. "Japan gives big sums of money a year in economic assistance to developing nations. So would not be a fiscal burden for us to pay the women."